Electronic Version 1.2.8
Stylesheet Version 1.0

# VISUAL DATABASE FOR ONLINE TRANSACTIONS

## Cross Reference to Related Applications

This application claims priority from provisional application number 60/267,643 filed February 9, 2001.

## Background of Invention

[0001]    Customer decision support over a channel often relies on searches. For example, a customer may make purchases based on searches done on a database. Many different online merchants have multiple different products for sale. A customer can access the online merchant"s site and search for the product by name or characteristics.

[0002]    For example, the customers may search by the word "battery" to find all batteries. Alternatively, the customer may narrow down the search by using more terms, for example "battery for brand X" to only find batteries of the type that are made for brand X. Typically the merchants return information about the product including product specifications and a picture of the product.

[0003]    This kind of searching can be carried out in many different client–server environments. For example, the large online merchants often allow the user to search in this way. The auction merchants, such as eBay, and the product comparing engines, such as "MySimon"also allows such searching.

[0004]
          However, a user might not know enough about an object they desire in order to fashion an educated search, especially when the product descriptions are from multiple different sources. For example, a user may want to purchase a specified item or product that has a certain look. There may be 10 or even 100 different ways of